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12 March 1984

MEMORANDUM: DDI Rep/Office of Legislative Liaison
7B02 HQS.

FROM: Office of Soviet Analysis

SUBJECT: Memorandum for the Record Regarding Briefing of
Senator Sam Nunn (D/GA), Senator John W. Warner
(R/VA) and Members of their Staffs

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1. The subjects of this briefing were "Soviet Decisionmaking on Arms Control", covered by [redacted] and "Prospects for the Resumption of the START/INF Negotiations" described by [redacted]. Both analysts are attached to the Security Issues Branch of the Soviet Policy Analysis Division and were accompanied by their Branch Chief [redacted].

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2. The substance of these briefings was as follows:

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a. Soviet Decisionmaking on Arms Control: Organizations and Methods

Soviet decisionmaking on arms control is highly centralized, strongly influenced by military concerns, and characterized by considerable continuity in both people and policy. While the ultimate authority for arms control policy rests with the Politburo, the Defense Council has been and is likely to remain the key decisionmaking body. The General Staff, as secretary to the Defense Council, plays a highly influential role in the policymaking process. Its influence is based on the fact that all other government and party organizations must provide their opinions and related information to the policymakers through the General Staff. [redacted]

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The Soviet system for arms control policy development tends to produce a high degree of expertise among the personnel at the decisionmaking and negotiating levels. Although such expertise makes the leadership quick to recognize the significance of new developments, rapid shifts in policy are uncharacteristic. This inflexibility is attributable in part to the unusually rigid

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nature of Soviet defense and economic planning. Because this process commits party and government institutions to long-term binding objectives, the Soviets tend to resist arms control initiatives that would adversely affect their established plans or assumptions. [redacted]

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b. Prospects for the Resumption of START/INF Negotiations

~~Chernenko inherits the dilemma Andropov faced--whether to~~ return to the Geneva talks before or after the US Presidential election. Prior to Chernenko's succession to the position of General Secretary, our evidence of the Soviets' inclination to resume the talks was mixed but contained more positive signs than have generally been credited in this country. Chernenko's long record of pro-detente statements and his recent speech before the Supreme Soviet suggest that he would be disposed to return to the negotiations this year, provided that the US demonstrates "flexibility" on one of the major INF issues or on lesser arms control topics such as chemical weapons, nuclear testing, or outer space weaponry. The likelihood of Chernenko acting in keeping with his apparent inclination depends, however, on eliciting the support of his Politburo colleagues and his capacity to bring this off remains uncertain. On balance, however, we believe that a Soviet assessment that President Reagan will be more amenable to concluding an agreement before rather than after the November 1984 elections favors the chances of the USSR returning to Geneva in the intervening months.

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